

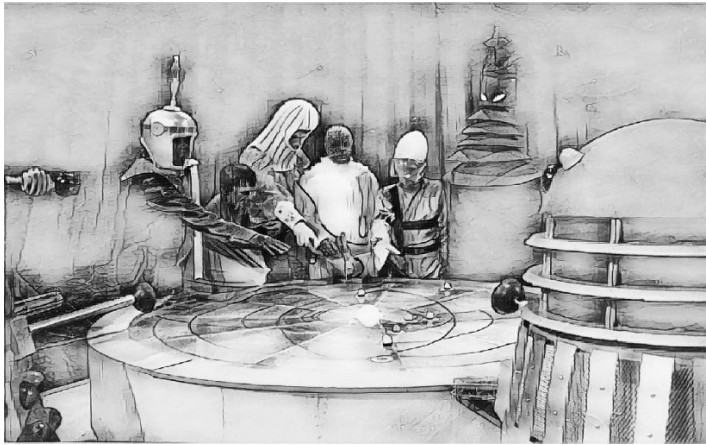


Doctor Who-The Mission to the Unknown

Novelisation by John Peel

Based on the Teleplay by Terry Nation

## 1-The Screaming Jungle



An eldritch scream rent the air; the sound of a hunting animal having succeeded in its quest. Garvey's eyes snapped open, and he cast about for several seconds. He could see nothing but the vast, impersonal jungle that covered almost all of the land area of this planet. Tall trees sought the sky, while huge creepers tried to tie them to the ground. Shrubs, bushes, grasses and worse were scattered about the trees. Every now and again, something rustled through the undergrowth, or there was a movement in the branches. In all the time that he had been here, Garvey had seen no animal life, however. Any creatures in this nightmare forest were too cautious to expose themselves to view. All Garvey or his companions had seen were the endless plants. Worst of all were the ever-present, beautiful-seeming orchid trees. Tall, multi-coloured growths, they gave forth delightful scents - and spat deadly poison on to anyone foolish enough to get too close to them. The plants were carnivorous, and once their prey had thrashed in agony and died, the plant would slowly lower its bell over the carcass and begin to feed. Garvey had even seen one variety of the orchids that shot out a jet of fire - a thick liquid that burst into flames on contact with the air. The liquid would stick to its victim and burn them horribly to death.

The jungle was at its worst when it showed its most lovely face. Bright colours, delectable scents and cheerful appearance meant that the plants were lures.

But they had heard far more. The jungle held a background chatter of noises - perhaps simply territorial cries, mates calling to one another and baby creatures calling out in puzzlement at the world in which they found themselves. Garvey doubted this: he believed that the cries were of death and impending death, of hunters and victims. He had become convinced that very soon his voice would echo through this nightmare forest.

He realized that he was panting in fear again, and made a heroic effort to calm down. Sweat plastered his face and the palms of his hands. Nervously, he rubbed them on his dark uniform to dry them. Once, on Earth, he had been considered handsome, but now his face was pinched with constant terror, etched by the rivulets of sweaty fear and dirtied by constantly being buried in the undergrowth when he hid from - what?

Now that he was awake, he began to wonder. Why was he here? What was he doing? What had happened...

The pain began, building swiftly behind his eyes, burning at his brain. With a hollow cry he collapsed, gripping his temples, squeezing, trying to relieve the terrible pain. He threw back his head, but even in his agony, his fear reminded him to make as little noise as possible, and he stayed silent. After long, stabbing seconds, the pain began to ebb, and he could let go of his head. Something had come back to him, and he now knew what he must do.

He reached for his belt, and unbuckled his pistol. With practised ease, he checked the remaining charges, and then set the weapon to its highest beam. A smile that would have done credit to some demon from the pits of Hell swept across his face. 'I remember,' he muttered to himself. 'Remember... I must kill. Must kill... kill...'

Just over a mile from Garvey, one alien artefact stood in a small clearing of its own creation. The small scout ship had swung down over Kembel as it had approached, and then this site had been selected for a landing. The rockets that had slowed the ship to a landing had burnt away the vegetation for several hundred yards around. Despite this, the jungle was starting even now to edge in closer, eager to fill up this gap in itself.

The scout ship was small, designed for in-system flight and not inter-planetary hops. It was barely large enough to contain its three passengers or crew and several days' supplies for them. The rest of the ship was the reaction drive, and it was this that was causing the problems. The final two members of this expedition were standing by a small hole in the hull. The plate they had removed lay on the scorched ground beside them.

Marc Cory was holding the tool chest, and trying to see what his companion was doing. Cory was lean, tall and dark, in a good-looking way. He was just a shade on the right side of thirty, and possessed what seemed to be a vast indifference to the Universe in general. Unlike Garvey, Cory was not terrified of Kembel; it was simply another world of the many he had visited in the past few years. Some had been worse than this, though most had been better. Kembel was just a job to Cory, one to be accomplished swiftly, so he could move on to the next.

His companion, currently head and shoulders into the cavity in the ship's hull, was the captain-pilot, Gordon Lowery. A gentler, cheerier man than Cory, Lowery also could have cared less about Kembel. He was a born spacer, eager to get off worlds with their unpleasant gravity and back into free space, where he belonged. At the moment, this was impossible, so he blamed the man responsible. 'Why you wanted to land on this planet I'll *never* know,' he grumbled over his shoulder. 'It's getting on my nerves.' To punctuate his comment, there was another ululating squeal from the jungle. 'I hate to think what kind of animal makes a noise like that,' he added. 'And you notice something? They're getting closer.' Hearing just a grunt from Cory, Lowery stuck his head out of the panel. 'I'll tell you one thing - I don't want to be around when whatever-it-is arrives. Hand me that wrench, will you?'

Cory peered into the box of gadgets, almost all of which looked as alien to him as the landscape. On a hunch, he pulled out what he considered to be a wrench and offered it to Lowery. Lowery scowled, waved it aside, and pulled a different instrument from the box. His head and arms vanished back into the hatchway. Cory shrugged. 'So, how's it going?' he asked, conversationally.

'Slow,' came the reply. 'The flareback melted some of the retaining heads, and all we've got is solid lumps of Tarnium instead of precision contacts. I've got to get them free and replace them.'

'Is there time for me to look around?'

Lowery's head popped out again, with a distinctly angry expression on it. 'Look, if we don't lift off in the next hour, we'll miss the rendezvous with the freighter. If we're not there, they'll assume that we aren't coming. They won't wait.'

'You'll make it, Lowery.'

'I'm doing the best I can,' Lowery yelled back, waving the wrench about threateningly. He didn't like passengers who made him damage his ship - especially ones who seemed indifferent to the problems. 'I didn't want to touch down on this lousy planet anyway.'

'Let's not start that again,' Cory suggested. 'Just get on with the work, eh?'

For a moment, Lowery looked all set to use the wrench on Cory, but he finally bent back to his task. Cory set down the box of tools, and stared off to the south. 'Where the devil is Garvey?' he asked, rhetorically. 'He should have been back by now.'

Lowery answered anyhow. 'He'll be here for take-off - *if* we take off. Screwdriver!' He held out his hand, and gestured. Cory hazarded another guess in the toolbox, and this time was correct. The instrument vanished into the hole.

With Cory's attention diverted from the jungle, he failed to see the rustling of the leaves as Garvey peered out at the ship. The lone man smiled his evil grin again, and stared at the ship and the two men working on it. He clutched at his pistol, and the haze descended over his brain again. What was it he had to do? Ah, yes! *Kill...*

He lurched unsteadily to his feet, and moved quietly into the open. Then he slipped about the clearing until the bulk of the scout ship was between him and his prey...

There was a loud snapping sound, and Lowery reemerged from the cavity in the hull, holding a piece of melted metal. 'Look at that!' he exclaimed. 'It's useless.' He flung it with considerable force towards the jungle. 'Get me a spare, will you?' Cory assumed that it was one of the retaining whatevers that the pilot had been complaining about, and started to rummage about in the toolbox for a replacement. 'Not in there,' Lowery said, 'in the ship's store.'

Nodding, Cory clambered inside the small ship. Lowery set to work on the other lump of fused metal. Lost in his work, he failed to see or hear the approaching form of Garvey. Garvey, on the other hand, had an excellent view of Lowery. He smiled his wicked smile again, and raised his pistol for a shot into the back of his unsuspecting comrade.

'Cory, don't bother!' Lowery yelled out. 'Spares aren't going to do us any good. This thing's spattered all over the valve linkages.'

Garvey's face was sweating, but his hand was steady. He began to squeeze the trigger, slowly...

At the sound of the blaster, Lowery spun about, in time to see the brief flare that silhouetted Garvey's body, and to hear the final scream that escaped the man's lips. As Garvey fell, face down, Lowery could see Cory standing in the hatchway, his pistol at the ready. Lowery ran to Garvey, and turned him over. It was quite obvious that the man was dead.

Stricken, Lowery looked up at Cory, who had merely jumped lightly down to the ground. He stood there, impassive, as though killing a man was merely all in a day's work. 'You... you've killed him. *Killed* Garvey!'

Cory replaced his pistol in its holster with apparent uninterest. 'It was him or you.'

The lack of remorse from Cory was too much for Lowery. He launched himself at the other. 'You sadistic swine!' he screamed. 'You didn't give him a chance! You just shot him dawn like an animal. *You just murdered him!*' Had Lowery been a trifle wiser, he would have known better than to attack Cory. Instead of his hands connecting with Cory's neck, his face connected with Cory's swinging fist.

Lowery was thrown back, and hit the ground with considerable force.

The breath was knocked out of him, and both his back and chin ached horribly. He could do nothing but watch as Cory moved lithely to Garvey's body. The man pulled open one of the fallen eyelids, nodded, and then started to examine Garvey's skin. Finally, just below and behind the right ear he found what he was looking for. Carefully, he removed the object from the skin, and held it out towards Lowery. 'Varga thorn,' he explained.

It meant nothing to Lowery, who was beginning to get mobile again. 'Varga thorn?' he echoed. Carefully, he clambered to his feet and crossed to Cory, moving slowly. He had no desire to run into another of those punches. He reached out to take the thorn.

'Careful,' Cory warned him. 'Don't prick yourself with it, or you'll end up the way that Garvey did - I'd have to kill you, too.'

The pilot whipped back his hand. 'What do you mean?'

Before Cory could reply, there came another long, mournful howl from the jungle. Cory glanced about, then gestured upwards. 'Let's go into the ship. I'd better explain.'

Lowery paused for just a moment to look down at his dead friend. Shaking his head, he reflected that Cory had better have a very good explanation for what he had done -

or, somehow, he'd find a way to kill the man. He followed Cory up into the ship, and shut the hatch behind him, closing off the nightmares of Kembel for a short while.

A very short while.

Garvey's body lay by the ship, still and stark against the dark earth. A slight twitch shook the hand, then another. The fingers began to flex slowly, and then clenched. Finally, the hand moved to help support what had once been Garvey. Over the back of the hand was a covering of long, white hairs. Interspersed among the hairs were the slim, deadly varga thorns only these were not stuck into the skin. They were growing *out* of it...

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The inside of the control room was cluttered, since space was at a premium. Three acceleration couches lined one wall. The airlock by which Cory and Lowery had entered filled a second, and Lowery's instrumentation took up most of the remaining room. For a moment, Cory stared at the dead panels, then turned to face Lowery. 'There are some facts you're entitled to know,' he stated. 'I hadn't intended to tell you anything, but Garvey's death has changed all of that.'

From the tone of Cory's voice, Lowery could tell that the man as far more worried than he might appear. Curiosity dawned within him. 'What sort of things?'

In reply, Cory fished out a small document from his breast pocket, and handed it over to Lowery. The pilot scanned the first page and blinked at what it said. Now he knew why Cory was so self-composed and efficient with his fists and gun. 'Special Security Service,' he muttered.

'That's right,' Cory agreed. 'The rest of the document gives me the authority to enlist the aid of any person, civilian or military.' He paused to give an ironic half-smile. 'You were just enlisted. From here on, you follow my orders to the letter.'

'Cory... I don't understand.' All thoughts of revenge for Garvey's death had fled now, replaced by a whole mountain of questions. 'You'd better give some details.'

'All right.' Cory moved to sit on one of the couches, and gestured for Lowery to join him. Then he continued: 'Did you ever hear of the Daleks?'

'Daleks?' Lowery looked puzzled. 'Who hasn't? They invaded the Earth a couple of times, and were beaten back. Every schoolkid knows about that. Haven't heard much about them since the Movellan Wars - oh, a thousand years or more now, I should think.'

'That's right. Well, just because they haven't been active in the Galaxy for a long time doesn't mean that they've just been sitting around. In the last five hundred years, they've gained control of over seventy planets in the Andromeda Galaxy, and some forty more in Miro's.'

Lowery shrugged. 'I don't see why that should concern us. They're both millions of light years away from us.'

'Yeah, that's what we thought. Plenty of time to worry when they came closer. But about a week ago, we had a report from the captain of a freighter out in this region. His navigator had spotted a ship he couldn't identify. He saw it very briefly, but gave us a very good description.'

'And?' prompted Lowery, afraid he knew what was coming.

'What he described was a Dalek ship.'

Outside, Garvey had finally managed to get both hands under himself and pushed down hard. As he rose, his legs came back to life, with the same spasmodic, jerky motions that his hands had shown. His trousers had ruptured, and through the tears, white hairs and thorns stuck out. His shoes split and fell off. His tunic tore, and the cloth hung in clumps. His head was unrecognizable now. All over his body were the same thick white hairs and the varga thorns jutting out at all angles.

Garvey was no longer a human being.

His hands had vanished, instead having become wood like branches, sticking out from the main stem. His feet had become roots, thick, and gnarled and long. Instead

of sinking into the ground, though, they supported the varga plant that had once been a laughing, cheerful person named Garvey. Unsteadily, the plant lurched, attempting to find its balance. One woody 'leg' at a time, it moved slowly towards the scout ship, a single thought fixed in what passed for its brain:

Kill...

Throwing down the microphone in disgust, Cory shook his head. 'Dead!' he grunted. 'You sure we can't repair the ship?'

'Not a chance,' Lowery replied, bitterly. 'There was too much damage from the molten metal in the circuits. If I had a full repair bay, maybe... and if I had wings, I could fly. Listen, do you think that the Daleks have set up some kind of a base on Kembel, then?'

'Could be. This is the most hostile planet in the Galaxy. Virtually everybody avoids it, and it seemed to me that if you added this fact to the sighting of the Dalek ship, this place could make an ideal base for any kind of secret preparations that the Daleks might want to make. That's why we came here.'

Lowery rubbed his chin thoughtfully. 'Did you tell anyone else about this hunch of yours?'

'No one,' Cory answered, disgusted with himself. 'Not even your commander. I just asked for a couple of men and small ship, without telling him why. He couldn't turn me down.' He waved the documents that Lowery had handed back over, then put them away. 'Even SSS don't know why

I'm here. I tend to have a reputation for taking long shots.'

'Then why are you now telling me?'

'Because of this.' Cory held out the thorn again. 'A thorn from a varga plant. It's a strange creature that's part animal, part vegetable. Looks a bit like a cactus, with poisoned spines. The toxin attacks the brain, overwhelming all rational thoughts and replacing them with an unreasoning desire to kill. Eventually, the poison seeps through the victim's body, and it starts to metabolize them. The person is gradually changed into a varga plant.'

Thinking about this, Lowery shuddered in disgust. He imagined his own body being infected, then being stolen from him as the varga started to grow within... 'Yeah, but... what's that got to do with the Daleks?'

'The only place that vargas grow naturally is on the Dalek home world of Skaro. If the vargas are here, then it makes sense that the Daleks are here, too.'

Deeper in the jungle, a small city occupied a clearing. Half hidden by the trees; the small scout had missed seeing it by only a couple of miles as it came down. The buildings were all made from metal and glass and were clustered around approximately half of a circular landing field. The field held berths for about twenty ships, though only two of these were currently occupied, both by Dalek saucers.

Within the base and overlooking this landing strip, the main control room was a hive of activity. Low-level lighting was quite sufficient for the Daleks, whose visual equipment, enhanced by computers, was far more acute than that of other species. Dozens of the gun-metal blue and silver Daleks busied themselves at their tasks - monitoring equipment, tracking stations, life-support, and a number of further computer screens. Around the room, below the large window that opened on to the field and the jungle beyond, a narrow platform circled the room.

A low, pulsing tone, like a vast electronic heart-beat, pervaded the whole city. For a brief moment, a high pitched, two-tone signal filled the control room. The Daleks on duty there turned their eye-sticks expectantly towards the main entrance. After a pause, the door hissed open, and the Black Dalek glided into the room.

The Black Dalek's eye-stick swivelled about, taking in all of the details. It had recently arrived on Kembel, sent by the Dalek Prime from Skaro to oversee the operation in person. With satisfaction, it noted that everything appeared to be progressing well. 'I will receive your reports,' it grated. 'Space monitor control.'

The monitor Dalek moved slightly forwards to identify itself. 'The emissaries from the seven planets are all on their way and will arrive on schedule.'

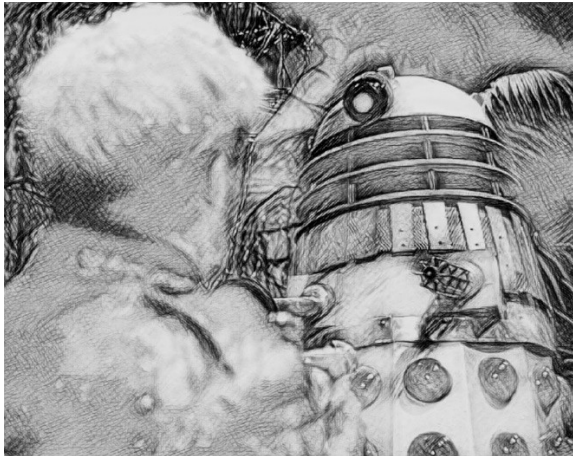
'Then the conference will begin at first sun,' the Black Dalek replied. 'Security report.'

A second Dalek edged forwards. 'Security patrols have located the alien spacecraft monitored landing on Kembel. Our patrol will reach it shortly.'

'The ship and its occupants must be totally destroyed!' the Black Dalek ordered. 'There must be no report on our work here. Destroy them!'

'It will be done.' The security leader glanced down at the panels. The patrol was almost in position now...

## 2-The Conference



The night was drawing in about them both. The air was cold, and even in his thermal uniform, Cory felt cold. He suspected that the chill was internal and held his pistol at the ready. The sounds from the jungle were wearing at his nerves, but what bothered him the most was the fact that they hadn't been able to find Garvey's body outside the ship. Had some animal, emboldened by hunger, snatched it? Or had something worse happened?

Movement in the bushes caught his attention, and he glided out to investigate. In the dim starlight, he could make out three white shapes standing by the edge of the trees. Vargas! They stood together, swaying slightly, though there was no breeze. Grimly, Cory turned back towards the ship. He steeled himself and heard what he had expected.

One of the vargas lurched and moved a pace closer. Lowery was bent over the small framework near the scout ship that he was creating. A signal rocket, about six feet long, lay beside him as he worked to assemble a short launch ramp for it. The cone of the rocket was open and empty. Hearing Cory returning, Lowery called over his shoulder: 'Anything out there?'

'Vargas,' Cory answered, coldly. 'They're closing in.'

'Closing in?' Lowery echoed in alarm, looking up at the impassive agent. 'You mean they can move?'

'Very slowly. They use their roots to drag themselves forwards. One way of getting at their food supplies. How long will you be with that rescue beacon?'

'It's almost finished.'

'Good.' Cory glanced about. 'I don't know how long we've got. The Daleks must know we're here by now. They'll be coming to look for us.'

'I still think you're jumping to conclusions,' Lowery protested, clutching at straws. 'Just because these... varga things grow here doesn't prove that the Daleks are here also.'

'Take my word for it. They're here.'

'Couldn't the vargas have grown here naturally?' At Cory's glance of withering scorn, Lowery said frantically: 'Well, it's possible, isn't it? Parallel evolution, that sort of thing? Maybe even transplanted somehow?'

'No. They were developed in Dalek laboratories. Daleks use them because they grow great natural protection. They feed on rotting flesh and kill to get that flesh. With the vargas about, the Daleks don't have to be quite so careful themselves. Now stop asking silly questions and get on with that rescue beacon.'

'All right, all right!' Lowery snapped, returning to work with redoubled haste. He had learned all about the Daleks in history classes at school, and their malevolence



towards all other life-forms was well ingrained in him. Varga plants were bad enough to face, but if the Daleks were really also here.

The four Daleks of the patrol halted in unison. One of them had a small device built into its arm-stick that looked like a compass. It moved about slightly, to verify the readings, then turned to its companions. 'Perceptor readings indicate alien spacecraft close by. We will move in on it from two directions.'

Two of the Daleks moved off to the east, chorusing: 'We obey.' The leader and the final Dalek circled to the west. Their objective was now almost within striking distance.

Unaware how close their enemies were, Lowery and Cory still worked with feverish haste. Actually, it was Lowery who was working, and Cory was getting nervous now, unable to help in matters of rocketry. 'You're sure this thing will work?' he asked, again.

'Sure. It's standard safety equipment on all scouts. You just record your message on the cassette and insert it into the capsule. I'll make sure that it gets launched safely into a high orbit. The transmitters cut in as soon as the capsule is in stable orbit. Simple.'

Cory wished it were that simple. 'With what we now know about the Daleks, we've got to be picked up.'

'Well, its tuned to the SSS special frequency you told me about. If they're monitoring for a call, then they'll get it loud and strong.'

'All we have to do is to stay alive till they get here,' Cory muttered, half to himself. Kembel was not an easy planet to stay alive on at the best of times; with the Vargas and the Daleks here as well, it might just turn out to be impossible...

Both men became aware of a growing noise in the night sky. They looked upwards, only to see something huge moving across the sky. Lights on the craft flickered and pulsed, bathing the two men in coloured shadows. The ship passed overhead at a slow speed, rumbling, spinning, and then vanishing over the forest.

Lowery let out his breath, hardly even aware that he had been holding it. 'That's the biggest spaceship I've ever seen,' he said, stunned. 'It's like nothing we've got.' 'It's from an outer galaxy,' Cory informed him.

'Then what the devil is it doing here on a God-forsaken planet like this?'

'I don't know.' Cory would dearly have loved to follow the ship, which was obviously heading for the Dalek base on Kembel, but he didn't dare. The Dalek patrols in that direction were certain to intercept them if they tried. 'But I'll tell you one thing. Something very big is happening here. You can bet your life that the Daleks are up to something that might even place our entire Galaxy in danger...'

Two of the patrol Daleks paused as the ship hurtled over their heads, aiming for a touchdown at the base in the jungle.

'The ship from the planet Gearon,' the first observed.

'The beginning of the alliance,' the second added. Together, they then continued their approach to the alien intruders' ship.

With a sigh of satisfaction, Lowery laid down his tools. The framework about the message rocket was now completed, and all that was missing was the warning itself. 'All done,' he announced. 'Give me the recorder and I'll tape the message.' When Cory didn't answer, Lowery nudged him. 'Ssh!' the agent said, urgently. Lowery jumped to his feet and followed Cory's gaze into the jungle. 'There's something moving out there.'

Lowery's throat went dry. 'Vargas?' he asked, hopefully. 'No. Moving too quickly for them. Come on, we've got to get away from here.'

'What about the distress signal?'

Cory thought for a moment. 'We'll take it with us. It doesn't weigh much. We'll launch it as soon as we get a chance.'

‘Right.’ Lowery hefted the cage. It wasn’t light, but they could take turns in carrying it until they felt safe enough to launch it. ‘Which way?’

Cory gestured to the north, then held up a warning hand. ‘Watch out for vargas,’ he warned, and then led the way across the clearing and into the jungle. They had barely slipped into the trees when Cory gestured for his companion to halt again. They stood for a second in the darkness and shadows and stared back.

From the far side of the clearing, two Daleks emerged, and moved gracefully towards the abandoned scout ship. ‘Get down and don’t make a sound!’ Cory whispered urgently. Lowery didn’t need a second warning.

Two further Daleks moved from the trees, and the four of them closed in on the ship. One of them moved close and examined the open hatchway. ‘The ship is empty,’ it announced. ‘The crew have gone.’

The patrol leader dismissed this. ‘We will search for them. Destroy the ship.’

The four Daleks moved back slightly, and four guns came up. The Daleks switched to their most powerful settings for the weapons, and all cut loose at the same second. Briefly, night was turned to day as a fierce white light bathed the jungle. As Cory and Lowery shielded their eyes from the glare, they could see the ship starting to melt and dissolve. Designed to stand the terrific heat of reentry, the ship still was unable to survive the tremendous energy outpouring from the Dalek guns.

Lowery had heard many stories of the Daleks, but even the legends had never hinted at such raw power from four small weapons. ‘It’s disintegrating,’ he breathed in shock. ‘Just falling apart...’

More practical, Cory grabbed his arm. ‘Let’s get out of here.’

Lowery needed no second urging to follow. He saw Cory moving off in the fading light and grabbed the rocket framework to follow. As he did so, something stung his hand, wincing in pain, he pulled it back, and stared, disbelieving, at his palm.

In the centre of it was a single varga thorn, still quivering. Panicking, Lowery ripped the thorn out and flung it away. Feverishly recalling what he had seen of snake-bites, he started to suck at the small red wound, trying to get the poison out before it could affect him. Then he heard movement and whipped his hand away from his mouth.

Cory’s face reappeared. ‘Come on, man, come on!’ he urged. ‘They’ll be after us in a minute!’

Lowery managed to calm himself and nod. If Cory noticed the sweat and fear, he obviously took it as being reaction to the Daleks. As long as the agent didn’t suspect the truth! Lowery knew that if Cory discovered about the thorn, he would be killed instantly. Cory was not the type of man to take unnecessary chances. Lowery had to keep it hidden and pray that the thorn hadn’t had time to infect him.

As he stumbled after Cory, though, he could feel his palm start to itch terribly...

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The four Daleks stood beside the twisted, glowing metal that had been the enemy ship. There was now no way off this planet for the aliens. The patrol leader turned to the nearest Dalek. ‘Report destruction of alien craft to control.’

‘I obey.’

The patrol leader switched its vision enhancers on. The infra-red receptors began to register the faint heat-trail of two humans away from the ship. ‘Advise that we will now seek out the crew. Alert all patrols.’

Following the pathway, all four Daleks began their hunt of Cory and Lowery.

Trantis glanced up as the representative from Gearon entered the conference room. This was the final member of the alliance, a somewhat faceless creature with an eggshaped head. Gearon wore a thick visor, since he came from a world almost perpetually in darkness. Without a pause, he moved to stand behind the lectern bearing his name.

The semicircular table was now filled. Trantis looked about, his facial tendrils quivering as he did in. He could sense the vague thoughts of the other representatives of their vast galactic sectors. Like him, they were eager to begin this grand alliance and start their conquest of the Galaxy. Beaus, from the Miron systems, was hardest to read: it was a tall creature, half-vegetable, half animal. It looked like an animated tree, possessing two burning eyes.

Yet, it too yearned for the battles to come, and the gaining of new territory for its species to seed. Warriën was inscrutable in his cowled hood, his pressure suit containing the atmosphere that he needed to stay alive on this oxygen-rich world. Similarly suited was the representative from the planet Sentreal. His dark face was wreathed in the chlorine fumes that he breathed, and a small radio antenna on his head kept him in constant contact with his fellow beings still on their ship; the inhabitants of their world were a communal mind, and isolating one from contact with others of his species would kill him. Malpha, the last of the members, was tall and colourless. His suit and his skin were white, save for the thick, dark network of veins that created a patchwork of his face.

The seven lecterns for the representatives were grouped about the semicircular table, and each representative stood behind his or its own lectern. Before them was a large circular table, whose top was a scale model of the Solar System. The sun lay in the centre, pulsing with mock life, and scattered about it in representations of their orbit lay the various planets. Malpha had to admit that the room was certainly very impressive. The lighting focused on this map, and each representative's eyes were drawn irresistibly towards this new territory that lay in wait for them.

Beyond the table, the Black Dalek and three subordinates stood. As ever, they were completely inscrutable. They moved slightly as they waited with apparently inexhaustible patience.

The document that the delegates were signing arrived in front of Malpha. With a swirl of his stylus, he signed it, and passed it down to the closest Dalek. The Dalek moved the paper to position it in front of the Black Dalek, who scanned it.

'It is done,' it stated. 'The seven great powers of the outer galaxies are one.'

The delegates all smiled – at least, those who could did.

The others expressed their appreciation in their own styles. Malpha, the final signatory, tapped his lectern, and all eyes turned on him.

'This is indeed a historic moment in the history of the Universe,' he stated, in somewhat pedantic tones. 'We seven from the outer galaxies, joining with a power from within the Solar System and with the Daleks. We represent the greatest war force ever assembled! Conquest assured!' He stepped from his lectern to the table before them all. With a gesture, he indicated a small red ball on its surface. 'Mars!' he exclaimed, then swept it from the surface. It clattered off into the darkness. 'Venus!' Another swing, and it went flying. 'Jupiter!' It followed suit. 'The lunar colonies!'

At this moment, the Black Dalek's arm shot out, resting on the small blue-green ball next in line. 'They will all fall before our might,' the Dalek grated. 'But the first of them will be the Earth!' Its arm shot forward, and the small globe of the Earth flew from the table and into the blackness beyond.

It was no good. Lowery rested on a small rock, staring in despair at his hand. It was burning badly now, and he knew that the varga poison had infected him. He was racked with small sobs, half-pain, half-fear, and he was sweating badly. His head ached, his mouth felt dry. Another paroxysm of agony shot through him, and he could feel the alienness within his body growing, striving to take him over. Shaking all over, he stared in horror at the back of his hand. Desperately, he pulled at his sleeve.

His hand and forearm were covered in thick, white hairs. He was turning into a varga!

Trying to blot out the sight and the knowledge, he pulled his sleeve down and closed his eyes. He wanted to scream, to panic, to run, to kill himself – but he knew that he was no longer himself...

Unaware of the torment in Lowery, Cory slipped back into the clearing. 'There you are,' he said, relieved. 'I thought I'd lost you.'

Struggling heroically, Lowery managed to stumble to his feet. He tried to act as though nothing was wrong. 'Where. where have you been?' His voice sounded odd, thicker, but Cory didn't seem to notice.

Ignoring the question for a moment, Cory moved over to the rocket and its launch frame. 'We've got to get this capsule off - and fast,' he said. He began to straighten it up and detached the recorder for the warning message. 'There's a city down there, a Dalek city. I got quite close. Close enough to hear an announcement that came through the loudspeaker system.'

His hand was a mass of flame now, but Lowery his back the pain. 'What... what did you hear?' He could hear a pulsing in his own ears, the sound of some alien ocean pounding at the shores of his consciousness. He could feel himself starting to slide down a long tunnel, a tunnel of blackness and despair.

Unaware of this, Cory worked on. 'Our Galaxy is to be invaded,' he said over his shoulder. 'Destroyed.'

It was too much. The pilot could no longer hold on to his thoughts. He buried his head in his hands, no longer caring that his white fur and sharp thorns were visible if the agent glanced up. It hurt too much to think, and he let his mind go, feeling the relief of simple obliteration. His mouth moved, and softly, he muttered: 'Kill... kill...'

'What did you say, Lowery?' Cory asked, finishing his preparations with the rocket. It was all set to launch now, as soon as he loaded the message. Just another couple of minutes...

'Kill,' slurred Lowery, and then with more force: 'Kill!'

Suddenly aware of what had happened, Cory jumped to his feet, his gun in his hand. 'The varga...' he breathed.

Lowery's pain-racked face finally broke into a contented smile. His features were starting to vanish behind a fine down of white hair, and thorns were sprouting from his skin. 'Yes... yes, I'll be one of them soon. Kill... kill!'

Lowery went for his pistol, but Cory was faster. The gun spat death, and the half-varga stumbled, then collapsed on to the ground. Cory looked down at the still form. It was better this way for Lowery. His mind was already destroyed, and his body merely the host for a repugnant alien parasite. Compared with that, death was pleasant, a friend to be welcomed.

Enough sentiment! He had a task to finish, and he had to warn the Earth. He triggered the recorder that he still held in his left hand, and began to speak into it in a low, urgent voice. 'This is Marc Cory, Special Security Service, reporting from the planet Kembel. The Daleks are planning the complete destruction of the Galaxy, beginning with the planet Earth. Together with the powers of the outer galaxies, they are assembling a massive war fleet.' He continued to speak, detailing the message that he had heard in the city. It was imperative that Earth was warned about the traitor who was set to betray them all, and to bring the forces of the Daleks right into the Solar System. He concluded: 'Whoever receives this message must relay the information immediately to SSS on Earth. It is vital that defence measures be put into operation at once. Message ends.' He clicked off the recorder.

He turned to place the recorder into the rocket and froze.

Four Daleks stood, watching him.

Cory had a single moment to realize that, after all his efforts, he had failed. Then the Daleks fired. His body was bathed in their lethal radiations, and Cory crumpled, falling lifeless to the ground.

The patrol leader looked down at his body, and then across at the corpse of the half-varga. 'Our plans for the conquest of Earth are safe. Whatever information he may have discovered has died with him. Return to the city.'

'We obey!' In unison, the four Daleks spun about, and set off through the jungle that held no terrors for them. In the clearing, all was peaceful again.

By Cory's dead hand, the recorder with the vital information in it lay unnoticed.

## **Credits**

### **First transmission**

1. Mission to the Unknown - Saturday 9 October 1965

### **Production**

Filming: June 1965 at Ealing Studios

Studio recording: August 1965 at TC4

### **Cast**

Marc Cory - Edward de Souza

Gordon Lowery - Jeremy Young

Jeff Garvey - Barry Jackson

Malpha - Robert Cartland

Dalek operators - Robert Jewell, Kevin Manser, John Scott Martin, Gerald Taylor

Dalek voices - David Graham, Peter Hawkins

(Doctor Who - William Hartnell; he was credited on screen although he didn't appear)

### **Crew**

Writer - Terry Nation

Incidental music - library tracks (Synchro-Stings by Trevor Duncan)

Story editor - Donald Tosh

Designers - Richard Hunt, Raymond Cusick

Producer - Verity Lambert

Director - Derek Martinus